

Meadowood Farm Proposed Acquisition



BACKGROUND: The Department of the Interior has been given an opportunity to acquire land in Fairfax County and manage it to provide open space for recreation, environmental education, and wild horse and burro interpretation. The proposed acquisition consists of about 800 acres of the Meadowood Farm on Mason Neck in Fairfax County, Virginia.

The 8,000-acre Mason Neck peninsula, approximately 18 miles south of Washington, D.C., is also the site of Gunston Hall - historic home of George Mason IV, author of the Virginia Bill of Rights. Public uses on Mason Neck include the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mason Neck State Park managed by the Commonwealth of Virginia, and Pohick Bay Regional Park managed by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. Cooperative management of this rural area provides 5,000 acres for recreation while protecting natural resources. Habitat is provided for migratory and resident waterfowl, bald eagle nesting, feeding, and roosting, and enhancement of species diversity for a variety of wildlife, including blue heron, wood ducks, screech owls, bluebirds, and tree frogs.

The proposed acquisition would be consistent with the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, as amended, and help achieve Presidential and Departmental goals to protect and conserve public land and natural resources. Though not an exchange, per se, the acquisition would be tied to the transfer of approximately 235 acres of land which has been identified for residential development under the 1999 Reuse Plan at the soon-to-be-closed, Lorton Prison site. Congress has appropriated funds to help GSA pay for a prerequisite, environmental clean up at Lorton.

At the Meadowood site, BLM would conduct resource management planning and prepare a management plan in harmony with surrounding land use and community interests. The public would have the opportunity to participate fully in this planning process. Meadowood Farm would be managed by BLM to provide public open space and recreation, including environmental education and interpretation of BLM resource management programs. Many residents and groups have publicly expressed support for the proposed acquisition as a means of protecting significant open space while providing low-intensity recreational opportunities. During a prior 45-day public comment period, all comments supported public acquisition and management of Meadowood Farm.

BLM has contracted for the gathering of cultural resource information and a pre-acquisition, environmental site assessment (ESA) on Meadowood Farm. When the cultural and environmental information is available, BLM will complete and issue a proposed planning analysis and environmental

assessment (PA/EA) of the proposed acquisition.

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March 09, 2001